the applicants respectfully traverse both of these rejections because Wen cannot properly be combined with Takabayashi under § 103(a) to render the claimed invention obvious.

To properly combine references under § 103(a), the Federal Circuit requires "some teaching, suggestion or incentive supporting the combination." ACS Hosp. Sys., Inc. v. Montefiore Hosp., 221 USPQ 929,933 (Fed. Cir. 1984). The applicants submit that the primary reference, Wen, provides no teaching, suggestion or incentive to combine it with the proposed secondary reference, Takabayashi, and thus that proposed combination is improper under § 103(a). A fair reading of Wen disclosed that its drawing figures, descriptions, and examples pertain to a "speech tutor" device that is strictly concerned with evaluating the user's pronunciation against a predefined threshold for acceptance, and is not intended to extend into natural language understanding. See Examples I and II, column 3, line 52 through column 4, line 62. The applicants further note Wen's detailed discussion in of frequency domain and time domain analysis, which are irrelevant to natural language processing, and also note the absence of any corresponding discussion of topics that are relevant to natural language processing.
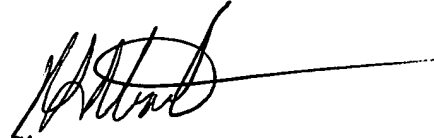
Thus, Wen is concerned with the how the user pronounces his/her words, and is not in any way concerned with the semantic meaning of those words. Further, those skilled in the art would readily recognize that adding natural language understanding to Wen would not enhance its explicitly-stated function as a "speech tutor" that is strictly concerned with evaluating the user's pronunciation. Adding the ability to perform natural language understanding to the Wen device, when such an addition does not substantially improve Wen's intended and stated function, would be such a fundamental change to Wen as to be impermissible hindsight reconstruction of the applicants' claimed invention.

Because combining the teaching of Takabayashi to the Wen device would not enhance Wen's stated function as a "speech tutor", there is no teaching, suggestion or incentive to combine Wen with Takabayashi, and accordingly, any proposed combination of those two references is improper under § 103(a) as interpreted by the Federal Circuit. The applicants thus request reconsideration and withdrawal of the stated rejections of claims 1-20.

The applicants submit that all claims pending in the case are allowable over the cited art. The Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned with any comments or suggestions for placing this application in even better condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 8 DEC , 2000

Signature
Rocco L. Adornato
Registration No. 40,480

Unisys Corporation
Unisys Way
Blue Bell, Pennsylvania 19424-0001
(215) 986-4111